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ABSTRACT

The findings of this second phase of a four-phase study of shrimp fishing focus on the effect of this occupation upon the family. Data were collected from a random sample of 67 boat captains, 73 wives, community personnel, and high school students in two Georgia coastal counties. The family structure reveals a traditional conception of male and female roles, with a high value placed on independence and autonomy. The demands and the dangerous nature of the job, along with long absences from home, create a high level of flexibility, a crisis orientation, and both competition and cooperation among fellow fishermen. The males, an "in group" in the community, identify their occupation with independence, strength, endurance, adventure, and communion with nature. To the men, the sea represents freedom from land and women. Opportunities for women are confined to marriage and family, and the women view these attainments as primary fulfillment. Those wishing to remain single and career-oriented are forced out of the community structure. The wives lead unstructured, independent lives and perceive the male presence with a degree of antiquity; most women are the primary disciplinarians. Both males and females seek refuge from stress in same-sex friendships. In raising their families, conformity and obedience to parents are the most valued behaviors. While many aspire to a formal education for both sons and daughters, realistically they expect their children to attain a social status much like their own. One-third of the families expect their sons to become shrimp fishermen. (Author/KC)

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CULTURAL SYSTEMS AND LIFESTYLES:

THE IMPACT OF THE OCCUPATION OF SHRIMPING

ON FAMILY LIFE*

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The influence of the occupation of father on family lifestyle is grist for the mill of fiction writers (The Godfather, How Green Was My Valley, etc.) but family sociologists have generally been more concerned with social class than with the specific impact of occupation on family lifestyle. However, the broadness of social class categories may conceal as much as it reveals. Occupation is an integral factor in the indexing of social class and as a concept social class has been useful for revelation of familial differences in such variables as socialization practices (Bronfenbrenner, 1958), ambition and attainment, (Kerckoff, 1974), family dissolution (Scanzoni, 1965), and value systems (Kohn, 1969).

As Kanter (1977) points out, the myth of separate family and work worlds acts to obscure the dynamic interrelationship of the two spheres. The discipline of sociology itself and the process of training in a specialty within the discipline act to reinforce this myth of separate worlds. Very few studies cut across the subspecialties (family, occupation, community, industry) and examine the important ways life in one area is linked to life in other areas. Some criticisms of role theory (Wrong, 1961; Crumrine, 1975; Kanter, 1977), and its attendent bias of assuming individuals can neatly compartmentalize their lives, have questioned this myth of separateness and lack of interconnections between arenas of life. In this same line, Rapoport notes "it is as though family structure, organization and functioning depended entirely on factors associated with the family and the individual personalities within it . . ." (1965).

We find relatively little in the family literature investigating the relationship of occupation to familial variables or to personality. However, some more concern is shown in occupation and general theory literature. Occupation has both direct and indirect influences upon the family (Schneider, 1957; Dubin and Lotka, 1936; Parsons, 1955; and Caplow, 1954). In a more direct way

the occupation an individual follows determines many aspects of family living. For example, the occupation determines the amount of income which the family lives on, as well as the regularity with which it comes. Also, occupation determines the amount of time which the worker will spend at home and whether that time is at night or day, regular or seasonal. Occupations are shared in varying degrees by members of the family. Also, some occupations may be more crisis prone and create more tensions and strains which may be transferred to the family and vice versa (Parsons, 1955). It may be that entrepeneurial occupations, such as shrimping, may involve a wider range of personality types and result in greater differences in proficiency, dedication and commitment to the job. These personality differences may then result in performance differentials which may result in a wider range of family lifestyles. Certain attitudes and values are created by work experience and these may infiltrate family relationships in varying ways. For example, it could be that in fishing families there is required both a high degree of cooperation and a great value on autonomy, resulting in incongruities leading to family disruption.

This paper reports, in part, upon the second phase of a four-phase research program which focuses upon the social and cultural systems and the interrelationships of the shrimping occupation, shrimper families, shrimp fishing community, and the shrimp industry. In this second phase, our primary concern is the identification in shrimp fishing families of their principal beliefs, behavioral patterns, perceptions, family roles or division of labor and value orientations. In addition, we will identify family role stresses in order that we may later develop more quantitative measures of these role stresses and adaptative processes.

To carry out this project, a random sample of 87 shrimp boat captains in two Georgia coastal counties was interviewed. During this time, a male field

worker lived in these counties and engaged in participant observation. The second stage (the family study) was comprised of a fifty-percent sample of wives of shrimp boat captains (N = 73) were interviewed. Four "representative families" agreed to permit female field workers to live with them in their home for one-month periods to observe directly patterns of family interaction. Unstructured interviews were conducted with community personnel. Twelve wives were later selected for intensive follow-up interviews. Finally, ninth and twelfth grade students in the local schools completed an hour-long pencil and paper protocol.

This paper reports on some aspects of all of these different stages of the research project. However, the primary focus is on the survey data of the wives' interviews and the participant observation of the families. Insights from the other stages is used where applicable.

The Occupation and Its Setting

While most occupations have one primary location, the shrimp fisherman's job has two; the land and the sea. The occupation is highly visible in the community--the flotilla of trawlers anchored at dock or viewed when coming into shore with their rigging highlighted against the sky is a very colorful sight and one that is commonly found on the logos of many kinds of local businesses. The tourist bureau uses the occupation as one of the area's main attractions. In the spring the blessing of the fleet with attendant three-day festivities brings this occupation into special focus for the other community members.

The time aspect of the occupation again gives it a special niche in the community. On off days and during the off-season, the men gather at local restaurants and bars as a group with their own special role relationships and language. But during good fishing days work demands are especially rigid, seriously delimiting the time the men have available for family life.

As Kanter points out (1977), it is important to examine the variable of absorptiveness of an occupation. During the season the shrimping occupation dominates all areas of the shrimper's family life. If it is to be a profitable year, the entire family must submerge their individual and collective needs to those of the occupation. This appears to become a total way of life for most men, and during the off-season they also spend their time with the boat; repairing and improving the boat and the equipment.

Parker (1967) has examined different types of occupations in terms of their level of absorptiveness. He was able to differentiate those where the family sphere was almost coterminious with the work sphere, those where interconnectedness was minimal, and those where the work-home arenas were in opposition. It seems the shrimping families best fit the work-home in opposition category as Parker describes it. The occupational characteristics of this home-work opposition category are psychologically or physically damaging, the husband views the home as a place to recuperate from work, and the wife's role in relation to her husband's occupation is peripheral. Some of the shrimp family wives (24.7 percent) did mention doing books for their husbands as a way in which they participated in the occupation. However, the other primary way (24.7 percent) in which they aided him in his job was doing the home jobs so he would have a nice, comfortable, nondemanding atmosphere.

While at sea, the captain and one striker (the assistant) function as a team. The captain must be skilled in the use of sonar and other electronic devices that many of the boats have to track down the catch and the striker must be equally effective and efficient in his work of managing the nets. However, the captain also has to utilize personal knowledge that is only acquired through long periods of actual fishing. Many of the high producers keep logs of where, when, and under what conditions the catch was located in

the past. When confronted with particular weather conditions at a given time of the year, they then have some basis for where to begin the search. Even those who do not keep written records must have highly developed skills of interpreting weather conditions, particularly as they influence the movement of the shrimp. In addition to being knowledgeable and diligent, the men must have a competitive stance as they search out the prized catch. The technological equipment used to track the shrimp is also useful in spotting other boats. The men are able to check out cues that will inform them if a particular boat is taking on full nets of shrimp or is simply dipping and testing. When the coming day is expected to be a good fishing day, the men try to outdo one another in getting a lead location on the tidal river. The most competitive captains will often sleep on their boats to gain a slight edge in their run for the sea.

However, due to the danger and ensuing crises that are a normal component of the occupation, the men are also highly cooperative. Motors may fail, the technological or other types of equipment may break down, men may fall overboard, and fire is not unknown. All of these, as well as other, crises will take place several miles from land and any aid that might come from such a source. Therefore, the men are attuned to a cooperative orientation as well as the competitive one.

Dennis, et al. (1956) found in examining life among English coal miners that a strong peer group support system and a cooperative crisis orientation influenced the development of strongly sex-segregated activities. The men engaged in a regular 'boys'-night-out' routine, but meanwhile expected wives to remain home and adopt a nurturant atmosphere for the comfort of the male when they were home. Because of the unpredictability and danger of the job situation, the men seemed to develop a strong peer orientation to reaffirm their ties of helpfulness and also to find a respite from the stress and strains of the

occupation. The shrimping occupation also is one fraught with danger. The safety of each crew is tied to navigational skills, but also to the vagaries of nature. While competitive [illegible]s is an important aspect of the job, there also is a strong cooperative spirit among the men. A fellow shrimper in trouble or in danger has first call on the time and resources of all those within helping distance. We found numerous examples of the men loaning quite large sums of money to a fellow fisherman for boat repair or for family financial problems. They were much more likely to rely on one another for help than on some member of their kin network. A reason offered for this was that they alone understood one anothers' problems, plus only they could comprehend the need for such large sums of money when the season was good and the catch was running well. While much is in flux within that occupational world, the rapid rise of electronic technology, changing regulations of state and federal governments, etc., the surrounding culture is almost impervious to those changes external to its boundaries. The tightly knit social fabric of the community spells out roles and role obligations in a highly persistent manner.

The Male World

The world of the men and women is strongly affected by this tiny crustacean and its sex life, of which much is still a mystery. The main shrimping season runs approximately from late May to early December with over 50 percent of the total catch being taken in late August to early October. The dedicated shrimper arises at three-thirty or four, fixes his breakfast, eats alone, and boards his readied boat to begin his run to the sea along with the outgoing tide. His day may end in early afternoon, but it is just as likely to continue until dark. If he miscalculates or misses the tide, or if he and his assistant, the striker, feel they have hit a good run, he may stay out overnight. During the off-season,

the most diligent and more proficient captains with the larger, better-equipped boats are likely to be found in the waters of the Carribean or the Gulf of Mexico.

In the community, these men comprise an in-group with a special language and a special accommodation to time and nature. They seem to share a concept of the sea as an escape from that larger society which fails to completely understand or share in their special images and demands. Their identity appears to be idealistic and slightly romantic. The adventurer in communion with nature is the first aspect of that image and the strength and endurance associated with the demands of the job is part of the second. A placard on one of the docks epitomizes this image in part:

FISHERMAN'S CODE

Early to bed,
Early to rise,
Fish like hell,
And make up lies.

This last line implies a certain amount of deviousness may also be implicated in that identity. Several pieces of evidence confirmed this, some too confidential to be revealed. One, not dangerous, was the secretive nature of the CB codes worked out to attempt to conceal the location and size of catch, as well as to relay more personal messages.

The sea may attract a special type of person with its mystery, beauty, and sense of adventure. The shrimpers we talked to seemed to identify the sea with freedom from both land and women. They perceived the demands of each of these were too restrictive and demanding. The sea seems to be identified with males and maleness. The land is the world of women; men belong to it only peripherally and do not accede easily to its restraints and demands. When asked if

there were special family times they try to be home, no matter what, and special times to be at sea, the men responded that most try to be home for Christmas, but they are out to sea again by New Years. When questioned further as to reasons for being out on New Years, they said they have a special get-together and pull the boats into a tight circle. They then party and watch all the weekend football games without the family interferences.

The land is termed "the mountain." The most successful fisherman is termed "king of the mountain." But the mountain exacts a hard-to-achieve conformity which contrasts strongly with their view of freedom and the sea. The wives often complained that when in dock the men were likely to be anywhere but around the home. Often the upkeep of the boat was seen by the wives as a rationalization for remaining with it and the men of the occupation. Several women noted that men will often walk out on any heated discussion and sleep on the boat with the excuse they want to get an early start the next day. One sixty-four year old woman noted that this got to be such a habit, one night her husband went to sleep on the boat after a noisy family discussion and the boat was not even in the water. It had been pulled up on the rails for repair!

The message the men seem to pass along to their sons concerning that 'mountain' is strongly tinged with anxiety regarding the ability to retain control. While most men expressed support for the idea of formal education, the real prize was independence. In our sample of captains, independence was rated the most valuable attribute of the job. They liked making the decisions and carrying out the job in a manner that suited them. Formal education implies a certain giving in to normative demands of the institutional framework. That this may be somewhat antithetical to independence is seen in the response of one captain as to his son's future goals. He hoped his son would acquire a high level of education. Yet he noted, if his son "wanted guns or a car, he would

have to earn his own money." This same father said all of his boys had started working on the boats around nine years of age. By refusing to buy certain valued items and then offering them a relatively easy opportunity to make fast money on the boats, the boys found it a minor matter to justify quitting school. In fact, a large number of the sample of wives (35 percent), as well as several of the school personnel, listed dropping out of school as a common problem among young males in the community. Moreover, an unrealistically high proportion of ninth-grade males (14 percent) expect to go into shrimping. Given the high cost of acquiring a dependable vessel (approximately $70,000) and the base size of the shrimp population, it is extremely unlikely the industry can accommodate a new entry group anywhere near this size.

The Female World

If the men value their independence from the land and the world of women, the women appear to accept this if it permits them a similarly high degree of autonomy. We found that most summertime days when the men are at work, women and children sleep late, swim, water ski, picnic together and live fairly unstructured lives. Meals are impromptu family get-togethers at one another's homes or perhaps on an offshore secluded island a mere half-hour boat ride away. Over 23 percent of the wives said their husbands were gone over eleven weeks of the year.

Small wonder the children and wives share a persistent ambiguity regarding the male presence. He imposes structure, regularity and standards that are his and not their own. Even discipline problems must be changed. When the father appears the women must take his expectations into account. Behavior that might go unpunished when he is away may have to be noted and sanctioned when he is present. In 64 percent of the families, wives reported they were the primary disciplinarian. Only 4 percent reported the husband as having that responsibility

and in 32 percent of the cases some sharing of the responsibility was noted. It may be assumed that this is desirable for the wives since only 25 percent reported ever disagreeing on family discipline.

Opportunities for women within the community are primarily confined to marriage and family. Most of these women (52 percent) grew up in the county with only 22 percent coming from a community larger than 10,000. Thirty-five percent of the sample had completed high school, but 17 percent had less than nine years of education. However, unlike most rural populations, they do not have large families ($\bar{X}$ = 2.3). Fifty-eight percent have never worked outside the home. Only thirteen percent of their families of orientation could be classified above working class, and if their mother worked (67 percent did not) the majority (74 percent) were employed in clerical, sales or service jobs. The women seem to perceive few options other than marriage, and in fact, youthful marriages are not uncommon. Employment opportunities are extremely limited and those wishing to remain single and work in a career-oriented job are structurally forced out. However, most choose early marriage as a means of separation from the home and parental control. Their identity seems to be comprised primarily of aspects concerning that of marriage and family life. When asked to name the single most important thing that ever happened to them, the most often mentioned event was the birth of a child. These are women who have accepted societal norms on marriage and children as the primary fulfillment for females. But if early marriage and motherhood are common facts of life, early divorce is a similar fact. Young females interviewed by the field workers said divorce is "like water off a duck's back." There are few social sanctions levied against the parties, and in fact, such topics seem welcome bits of conversation with much guessing as to who will pair off next. This does not clearly indicate weak family ties however. Most women expect their primary gratifications

to take place within a family context. When asked to name the single, most important value in raising a family, over 40 percent said it was the affection between family members. The high divorce rate in this population may be an adjustment to a social system with a restricted opportunity structure for females, a low degree of social sanctioning (only 4 percent of the sample are Catholic), young men able to earn good incomes, and a high degree of sensitivity to the biological drives of males and females from constant interaction with the natural world of the sea.

The marriages seem to be formed along fairly conventional lines with a fairly rigid division of labor. The female is in charge of the home and its attendant chores. There is little blurring of sex lines. One hundred percent of the wives report they or another female family member do the dishes, 90 percent do all meal preparation, and 89 percent report females do the other housekeeping tasks. The only activity where males predominate is in mowing the lawn. The high visibility of women in home tasks contrasts sharply with their invisibility around the boat. During the interview sessions they often reacted to the interviewers as if they were 'innocents abroad' when they were asked if they would fill in for their husband's striker if he should fail to show up for any reason.

Yet, it is not clear women buy this sex-bounded world. Forty-two percent said under extreme circumstances they would fill in as a striker, but only 2 percent reported ever having done anything around the boat. They most often mentioned the hard labor involved in a striker's job as a reason why they could not or would not do it. They also mentioned their dislike of the water. However, from observation it seems evident a striker's job is something most young, healthy women could handle. Around the home the jobs these same women undertake are often equally or more laborious than the striker's work. In terms

of the water, these are the same women who report one of their favorite means of recreation is pleasure boating and swimming.

We would argue the strongest reason for this rigid division of labor is the perception of the job and the sea as a natural arena for men. Historically, the sea has often been portrayed as a place where men can be men and women may even be bad luck.

Even when responding to questions on aspirations and expectations for sons and daughters, these women replied from a traditional, sex-typed perspective. In answer to the question, "If there were no limitations on abilities or resources, how far would you like your sons/daughters to go in school?," only 24 percent of the sample aspired for their daughters to finish a four-year college program. Over 34 percent would like their sons to complete a similar program of study. But, when asked to rate actual expectations, given limitations on abilities and resources, only 16 percent really had hopes of their daughters finishing college, and only 12 percent felt their sons might do so. In the ideal world, they would like their sons to finish college, but realistically, if they were gambling they would place their bets on the daughters. In addition, a full third of the sample expected their sons to go into shrimping.

(Tables I and II here)

A traditional view of development is that females mature earlier than males, both physically and psychologically. This population seems to also follow that belief. In responding to the question "When can a girl/boy be considered an adult?" over twice as many respondents felt a male must be over twenty to be so perceived, while females were twice as likely to be seen as adult before they reached that twentieth birthday.

(Table III here)

The Family World

As Kohn has noted (1969) familes of men tied to a job requiring extensive interaction with physical objects place a high value on conforming behavior rather than on self direction and initiative. However, Miller and Swanson (1958) found entrepeneurial families stressed inner direction and an independent and actively manipulative value structure. The shrimping occupation seems to fit the definition of entrepeneur as used by Miller and Swanson. It is a small scale operation with a simple division of labor, provides for mobility and income through risk taking and competition. On examing the data, however, it appears these families more clearly fall into Kohn's blue collar category than in the entrepeneurial family of the Miller and Swanson study.

(Table IV here)

Moreover, disobedience was the most frequently punished misbehavior (38.4 percent) with sibling arguments and fights the next closest (13.7 percent) category of punished behavior.

Children are expected to learn to be orderly quite early in life. Nearly half of the mothers (47.9 percent) felt children should begin putting away toys and picking up after themselves by the time they were five years old. The two most important values for both boys and girls were honesty and good manners, with obedience to parents a close third.

In observing these parents, one reason for the high value on parental obedience was clear. These families spend a great deal of their leisure time around water and for the sake of safety it is important for young children to learn to obey parental commands quickly and completely. Several mothers told tales of quick rescues of children who failed to follow orders. Moreover, the young children learned quite early to obey commands of other mothers as well. During the observation period, it was quite common to note discipline accorded a child by some woman other than its mother.

Visiting friends and neighbors is one of the favorite leisure time activities as reported by the women. Yet, on further examination, it is evident this is a segregated activity. Only 24.7 percent indicated the husband accompanied them on these sojourns. These women live in a tightly bounded, highly personal interpersonal world. While they perceive many social problems in the community, most seek help from friends and family.

Despite the fact men are most notable by their absence in daily affairs, over one-fourth of the women felt family life was the most important thing they had in common with their mate. If they disagree at all, money problems stand first as the main source of contention. Nearly one-third of the wives said money was a prime problem of being the wife of a shrimper with only 17.8 percent noting the loneliness that emanates from the absence of their spouse. While half of these women perceive the occupation as dangerous, over 60 percent say they do not worry overly much about the safety of their spouse. It may be that these women perceive both themselves and their mate as capable individuals, for almost 70 percent report they do not worry much about the family during these prolonged absences, and the precautions they take are quite ordinary (locking doors, alerting neighbors). In spite of the fact that guns are frequently observed in display cases in the home and in the rear windows of local pickup trucks, no one mentioned keeping guns as a means of protection.

Most of these wives accept the lack of mobility for themselves but hope for more for their children. Their orientation to life is quite family centered and traditional. While their income on the average seems quite high for this region (almost one-fourth report a total over $20,000) and 80 percent of these wives have their own automobile, they appear to be tied to the occupational conditions inherent in the enterprise. As they assess the chances for success or failure and the risks inherent in the occupation, they appear to make

choices based on that objective reality. Given the nature of alternative options and the socialization to hearth and home, it is not surprising that over half of the subjects report this is one of the happier periods of their lives. Moreover, they appear to have few qualms in thinking about their daughters entering this same world. Over 53 percent of the sample said they would adivse a daughter to marry a shrimper. But of those who have a married daughter only 2.7 percent have chosen a shrimp fisherman as a mate. The message the mothers communicate to the daughter must contain an element of ambiguity since exactly the same percent (53.4) that say they would advise their daughter to marry a shrimper also report they wish their husband had another type of occupation. Even the message the children get from the father is not totally clear since over four-fifths (80.8 percent) of the men have tried other occupations at some time in their life.

Summary

Consistent with the approach used to examine the occupation and the family of these commercial shrimpers, the conceptual position of this study is that human behavior, and therefore family behavior, is a dependent variable which is the resultant of the interplay of four independent variables: (1) socio-cultural or the normative structure, (2) personality, (3) situation, and (4) social interaction (Nix, 1960; Bates and Harvey, 1975). Role stresses or strains are based in the location of maladjustment within and between these four sets of variables, and mediating influence may reside as well in any of the four areas.

As Hughes states (1958) an immersion in an occupational enterprise so pervasive in all aspects of the worker's life eventuates in the formation of a collective consciousness. This would infer that the attitudes, beliefs, and

values we observed in these shrimping families are not simply matters of individual preference, nor are they absolutely governed by social class as Marx proposed. We would submit that this rather unique occupation impacts significantly on those who make it their life. Those who cannot or do not meet the role requirements may soon abdicate the role. The large number of men who have tried other jobs points to a certain congruity between the occupational structure and the personality structure.

Within the world of the family it would appear incompatible to have two primary role occupants that prize independence and autonomy in their role behavior. This would seem to possibly undercut family solidarity. However, the mediating mechanisms may be found at several levels. The socio-cultural system's lack of disapproval of divorce may make it relatively easy to disengage from the role when role performance makes seemingly impossible demands on the participants. Also, the socialization process also may act as a mediator in that these individuals expect to find their major life satisfactions within the family and thus they may accept the role demands in order to participate in family life. The system of social interaction may also mediate role strain. Both the males and females are able to seek refuge from the stress and strain of work and family life in same-sex friendship groups. Further examination of the data will, no doubt, reveal other adaptive processes that act to ameliorate the conflicts and strains that appear to be inherent in the nature of the occupational and family structures.

TABLE 1

MOTHERS' EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS
FOR CHILDREN

SEX	Less Than College	College+	TOTAL
Sons	14 (31.8)	30 (68.2)	44 (100.0)
Daughters	14 (37.8)	23 (62.2)	37 (100.0)
TOTAL	28 (34.6)	53 (65.4)	81 (100.0)

$\chi^2 = 0.322$, df = 1 ($p > 0.005$)

TABLE II

MOTHERS' EDUCATIONAL EXPECTATIONS
FOR CHILDREN

SEX	Less Than College	College+	TOTAL
Sons	33 (76.7)	10 (23.3)	43 (100.0)
Daughters	22 (59.5)	15 (40.5)	37 (100.0)
TOTAL	55 (68.8)	25 (31.2)	80 (100.0)

$\chi^2 = 2.766$, df = 1 ($p > 0.05$)

TABLE III

DIFFERENCES IN MOTHERS' PERCEPTION
OF ADULT STATUS OF CHILDREN

SEX	AGE		TOTAL
	Under 20	Over 20	
Sons	26 (41.3)	37 (58.7)	63 (100.0)
Daughters	43 (70.5)	18 (29.5)	61 (100.0)
TOTAL	69 (55.6)	55 (44.4)	124 (100.0)

$\chi^2 = 10.723$, df = 1 ($p < 0.01$)

TABLE IV

MOTHERS' CONFORMITY AND NONCONFORMITY
VALUE SCORES FOR CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR

SEX	Behavioral Value		TOTAL
	Conformity	Nonconformity	
Boys	56 (82.4)	12 (17.6)	68 (100.0)
Girls	52 (78.8)	14 (21.2)	66 (100.0)
TOTAL	108 (80.6)	26 (19.4)	134 (100.0)

$\chi^2 = 0.272$, df = 1 ($p > 0.05$)

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